

# BARWON

## Poll Dorset and White Suffolk Stud

Summer 2008/2009

### Welcome

Welcome to the 2008 Summer Newsletter. I am not going to talk about the weather, we are all over that...it can only get better.

On a bright note, the Carlton Footy Club looks as though it will be winning Premiership 17 in 2009 with top draft picks and Juddy, Fev and Murph firing!! (And Richard Pratt will stay out of jail because he just bought all the Victorian jails-ha ha).

The future of the meat-sheep industry looks as bright as the Carlton FC. With the Aussie dollar down around 65c the export market is in full swing. Demand for lamb is strong nationally and internationally.

It is interesting to note that 10 years ago everyone wanted to produce and sell prime lambs. Since then there has been a trend to producing store and feeder lambs, now a very major part of our industry.

There has also been a huge influence on the industry with merino ewes being used as prime lamb mothers. The meat-sheep ram has had to change to accommodate this significant change. Merino structure and frame has been developed to maximise wool production and not meat, so the ram must have excellent carcass traits. The aim is to produce medium framed, structurally correct, early maturing sheep with high meat yield.

A number of industry commentators have highlighted the need to use caution when assessing rams using objective measurements or figures (ASBVs). When purchasing rams for your commercial flock it is essential to use visual appraisal alongside the figures. Meat processors are looking for shape and evenness in their lambs—they don't check the figures!

We are currently selecting the rams to be presented at our 4<sup>th</sup> Autumn Ram Sale on 6<sup>th</sup> February. I hope to see you at the sale. Don't forget to check out our new website [www.barwonstud.com.au](http://www.barwonstud.com.au).

Mark Yates,  
Studmaster.



Mark Yates (left) and Leigh Clifford, Gowan Brae Poll Dorset Stud, Millicent, South Australia, the successful purchaser of the 3rd top price ram, Barwon 070434 (pictured) at the 2008 Australasian Dorset Championships in Bendigo in September. The ram sold for \$6000.

### Balance Required

Objective measurement of rams is now an accepted part of the meat-sheep industry. The adoption of Lambplan has been widespread in the stud industry and the use of Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) is assisting stud breeders in the selection of high performing rams. Stud breeders spend a lot of time scanning rams and collecting data to provide the ASBVs. These 'figures' are now expected to be provided when producers are selecting and purchasing rams to join to commercial flock ewes.

Now we are used to using the ASBVs we need to step back and check that the carcasses being produced match the customer requirements. It is questionable whether they are.

Chris Cummins, (Managing Director, Breakout River Meats, Cowra Meat Processors) submitted a Letter to the Editor of the Australian Poll Dorset Journal (Vol 38, No 3, Dec 2008). He is concerned about where the genetics of the sheep-meat industry are heading. Chris writes “People have been misguided by measurements and growth rates that have become the Holy Grail for a lot of breeders. This has left behind the good old fashion visual approach that is still used by your top-end retail butchers when selecting a carcase.

“They will tell you whether a carcass will yield or not, just on a visual assessment, not measurement. I can hear some of you saying ‘well they should get with the times’. The fact is they are with the times and all run successful retail shops that have withstood the supermarket onslaught of the past 20 years. These butchers are very particular in what they buy because it’s their livelihood at stake”.

These comments should be a wake up call to meat-sheep producers. Don’t get too focused on ASBVs–



*Barwon Stud Spring Ram Sale 2008. Barwon places a strong emphasis on visual appraisal when selecting rams and listens to market feedback through their own sales, via clients and agents.*



remember to use your skills in visual appraisal to select the best suited rams for your target product. ASBVs are a useful tool, but only when used in conjunction with visual assessment and when you fully understand what they actually mean.

Chris Cummins continues. “When you get these butchers saying that the ‘measured for growth carcass is not yielding and has no visual appeal to a customer’ we should be listening. Long, lean, lanky and lacking weren’t my words but they describe what I’m talking about very well. What the industry needs is a meatier carcass with a full shoulder, loin and leg so that those butchers can cut there way out of a lamb”.

This is definitely food for thought, if not action. Keep in mind the requirements of the market you are aiming for and use the ASBVs when selecting a ram as a tool not a rule. And don’t forget that half the genetics come from the ewe.

#### **ASBV Accuracy**

Lambplan and ASBVs are a system of benchmarking genetic traits. Index values are calculated using pedigree information and objective measurements (liveweight, eye muscle and fat depth) which are added to the Lambplan database for the breed. As with all statistics and derived indices there is a level of error. This is provided as an accuracy figure (0-100) when ASBVs are presented, for example in a sale catalogue. The most reliable figures or ASBVS have an accuracy figure close to 100. The accuracy depends a lot on how much data is available for the individual animal, particularly pedigree information.

Merry  
Christmas  
and  
Happy  
New Year



## Client Feedback

David and Julia Ham, 'Nundi', Tarcutta

David and Julia have been producing feeder lambs from their merino ewes joined to Barwon Poll Dorset rams. Traditionally wool producers, they find their country is better suited to producing feeder lambs than finishing prime lambs without regular supplementary feeding.

David and Julia recently sold 4 decks of lambs to Tony Rutter, well know and respected lamb finisher from Wagga Wagga.

Tony was very happy with the style of lamb, with a good rack and loins and nice length of body.

Tony finishes lambs for a range of markets, both domestic and export. He says, "All markets are looking for the same type of lamb. Carcasses with good eye muscle area, shape in the legs and not too tall. All the expensive cuts are in the loin, rump and leg so that's what the customer wants".

ASBVs can help with identifying sires with good eye muscle area and growth rates but visual assessment is needed to get the body shape sort after by the end-user.

Tony has just purchased 8500 feeder lambs out of the Yass district, all sired by Barwon Poll Dorset rams. Phil Butt, Landmark, Yass told Tony he selected the ram sires for width across the back. That is the important characteristic to produce lambs with high yield of premium cuts.

Tony Rutter believes the industry needs to adjust it's direction away from extra tall sheep. He is penalised about \$11 per head or 50¢/kg for lambs that are too tall or long in the leg. Tony says, "Whether it is for supermarkets, restaurants or retail butchers, for domestic or export markets, the message is clear—wide across the back and shape in the legs—not big long gangly legs."

## Client Profile

Russell Pumpa, Property Manager,  
'The Bulls Run', Wagga Wagga

Russell Pumpa attended his first Barwon Spring Sale this year, along with his two year old son, Tom and father Ian. Russell will join 9000 merino ewes



*Start 'em young! Tom Pumpa is learning some visual appraisal skills from his Dad, Russell and Grandfather, Ian. Russell is the Property Manager, 'The Bulls Run'.*

to poll dorsets, including those purchased from Barwon Stud. He has chosen Poll Dorset rams to optimise growth rate and productivity, resulting in a quicker turn-off. The Bulls Run has three target markets: finished prime lambs sold in the yards at Wagga Wagga; finished prime lambs sold over-the-hook; and sucker lambs sold as feeders.

Joining started on 2<sup>nd</sup> December for lambing starting in early May and a lamb selling season from August through to October. Lambing in May fits in with the lucerne seed and hay enterprise, and the summer irrigated corn, both produced under centre-pivot irrigation systems.

Harvest of the highly winter active lucerne varieties (rated 8 or 9 for winter activity) is wrapped up in February or early March when it is allowed to recover. The lucerne then provides grazing from April until early September when it is locked up for seed, or sometimes hay production.

Grazing cereal or ryegrass is sown into the corn stubble under the pivots in early autumn. This provides excellent grazing through the winter until mid-September when it is re-sown to corn.

The overall goal is to have all the lambs sold before winter crop harvest and corn sowing season.

# 2009 Autumn Ram Sale

## Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February at 10:30 am



### Sale Offering

Barwon will be offering 2007 spring drop rams and 2008 autumn drop rams:

Poll Dorset—approximately 3 stud rams and 140 flock rams

White Suffolk—approximately 2 stud rams and 40 flock rams.

This year's rams are equal and beyond the quality you have come to expect from Barwon.

Lambplan figures will be available on our new website mid-January and on sale day.

**BARWON**   
Poll Dorset and White Suffolk Stud

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